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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
16 December 1954

State Dept. review completed

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: Churchill's Post-Birthday Remark on His Retirement Plans.

In the course of a speech to the House of Commons on 1 December--the day after his birthday--Sir Winston Churchill made a comment on his retirement plans which has, in connection with the growing feeling that ratification of the London and Paris accords will lead to a conference with the Soviet Union, more than a passing interest.

Quoting from his Woodford speech on 23 November, Churchill stated, "It was in May last year that I advocated that we, with our allies, should work towards closer contact with Russia in order to make sure whether that great people had undergone any important change of mood and outlook under their new leadership."

Then, in what is described as a murmured aside, Churchill said, "In fact, that is the only explanation of my presence here today. It is still my purpose." This remark was evidently not noted by any American press sources, and only the Manchester Guardian gave it any attention in Britain. The Guardian stated in its weekly edition of 9 December, "It was perhaps the most significant thing he said. It suggests once more that he is remaining in office for no other reason than to contribute if he can to a peaceful settlement between east and west."

Last August, when Churchill had evidently threatened to form a coalition with the Labor Party if his cabinet colleagues would not support his desire for a top-level meeting, the present Minister of Defense, Harold Macmillan, told Ambassador Aldrich that when Churchill feels ill he decides that he must retire; then when he feels well again he changes his mind.

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